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ABSTRACT

The reflective inquiry model of teacher education uses case methods to develop a particular professional way of thinking characteristic of expert teachers. Teaching cases play an important role in preparing teachers emotionally as well as intellectually for the problems of multicultural classrooms, and in legitimizing the discussion of crucial educational factors, such as teacher personality, that the positivistic research tradition ignores. "Malaise of the Spirit," a case about a teacher's response to the demoralization in a racially divided Alaskan high school, illustrates the way a case can give novices: (1) vicarious experience with the kinds of problematic situations characteristic of teaching; (2) a model of how an expert teacher frames and constructs educational problems; (3) a model of how a sophisticated teacher inquires about and reflects on such problems; (4) a stock of educational strategies for use in analogous problem situations; and (5) a sense that teaching is an inherently ambiguous activity requiring continuous reflection. This paper describes (1) the issues in the exemplary case; (2) the Teachers for Alaska program, which uses such cases to prepare teachers for small high schools in remote Native villages; (3) how the cases were written; and (4) how classes based on cases are conducted. This paper contains 16 references and a 5-page synopsis of the 52-page exemplary case. (SV)

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LEARNING TO THINK LIKE A TEACHER: THE STUDY OF CASES

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LEARNING TO THINK LIKE A TEACHER:
THE STUDY OF CASES

Students entering Harvard Law School hear a story which has been passed down for at least fifty years. A powerful and brilliant professor (at least three have been the named figures as this legend has outlasted retirements and successions), strides to the podium and surveys his domain -- a hundred and sixty five nervous first year law students. He selects his victim.

"Sir," says the professor, "state the facts in this case."

The quaking student gives an answer that is inadequate. The professor demands a better one. The student stumbles.

The professor becomes silent. He reaches deep into his suit pocket, pulls out a dime, and puts it on the podium.

"Kid," he announces, "you'll never make a lawyer. Take this dime and call your mother. Tell her to come and get you. Tell her you're never going to be a lawyer."

The student freezes in his seat.

"What are you waiting for?" the professor roars. "Come here and get this dime. Call your mother."

The class tenses in silence. The student gets up and staggers toward the podium. He gets the dime and trudges toward the door. At the door, he stops, draws himself up and says, "Sir, you are a bastard!"

"Go back to your seat," says the professor. "You're beginning to act like a lawyer."

Legends of this type socialize newcomers into the culture of an institution (Wilkins, 1983). The story communicates to entering students a basic purpose of professional education at the Harvard Law School -- teaching students the habits of skepticism, verbal aggressiveness, and readiness to challenge power, of a "real lawyer." The law school, like the Harvard Business School, has a long tradition of using case methods to develop in students the frame of mind that characterizes a well-trained professional in a particular field of expertise. This legend is not one of the official "cases" -- they are appellate court decisions -- but it is lore which students remember years after they have forgotten most of their classwork.

The cases studied are decisions of appeals courts in actual, individual lawsuits. The format of appellate decisions has been the same for centuries. The judge writing the opinion sets out the facts. For example, in the most famous of all contract cases, Hadley vs. Baxendale, a miller needed a shaft repaired and returned fast. He told a shipper how important speed was, and the shipper agreed to deliver the shaft quickly. But the shipper delivered it late. The problem in the case is whether the miller should be able to recover from the shipper the profits lost on account of the shipper's negligent delay. Certain general principles apply to this problem: "Give the miller the profits he would have made if the contract had been performed. Award those damages which naturally and foreseeably flowed from the breach." These principles suggest the miller should win. But the miller loses. Perhaps common sense suggested to the judges that no shipping industry could survive so broad an application of

these generalizations. (Here's an example: "Taxi driver, I have a million dollar deal riding on whether you can get me to the airport in time to catch the 8:25, so I'll pay you a hundred dollars over the meter if you can do it." "It's a deal, sir." Cab driver doesn't make it. Cab driver only gets the meter amount, but he does not owe the lost million dollars.)

Such cases teach the law student how to "think like a lawyer," that is, how to recognize which fact patterns call for which principles ("issue spotting," in law school jargon), and how to apply the general ethical principles of law, such as "a person who breaks his contract ought to put the other where he would have been if the contract had been performed," to particular facts. They also give the student a great deal of vicarious experience of business administrative processes, criminal cases, and other cases of life previously unfamiliar. The particularization of general principles is surprisingly complex and difficult and requires three years of law school and years of practice to master. The purpose of law school is to teach the student the principles used in the major fields of law, and the intellectual process of thinking like a lawyer.

Schools of Education are less clear about their purposes than law or other professional schools. The position that a fundamental aim of a School of Education is to develop a particular professional way of thinking is only one of many competing paradigms of teacher education. In current discussions, this position is labeled the "reflective inquiry" model as opposed to "eclectic" or "technical-skills" driven models of teacher education (Zeichner, 1983; Tom, 1984). This paper does not attempt to justify the position that teacher education programs should,

above all, teach the skills of "thinking like a teacher" -- learning to formulate educational problems, designing strategies which fit a specific group of children, and reflecting on the moral as well as technical issues embedded in everyday instructional decisions. We and others have made such arguments elsewhere (Kleinfeld & Noordhoff, 1988; Zeichner & Liston, 1987; Feiman-Nemser, 1980).

This paper has a more specific purpose: We show how case methods can be used to develop the particular professional way of thinking characteristic of expert teachers. We use a particular case, "Malaise of the Spirit," to illustrate the way a case can give novices: 1) vicarious experience with the kinds of problematic situations characteristic of teaching, 2) a model of how an expert teacher goes about framing and constructing educational problems, 3) a model of how a sophisticated teacher inquires about and reflects on such problems, 4) a stock of educational strategies for use in analogous problem situations, and 5) a sense that teaching is an inherently ambiguous activity requiring continuous reflection. "Thinking like a teacher," this case shows students, is a creative way of thinking, a process of problem framing and inquiry, a process of design.

In this paper, we first describe the issues in our exemplary case, "Malaise of the Spirit." Second, we describe the context, the type of teacher education program we have prepared this case for. Next, we describe how we go about getting expert teachers to write cases and how we conduct classes based on cases. Finally, we try to be clear and specific about our purposes in using cases -- exactly what we want to help students

learn or come to appreciate. We emphasize the importance of cases in preparing teachers emotionally, not only intellectually, for the kinds of problems they will face in multi-cultural classrooms. We show how case methods legitimize the discussion of crucial educational factors -- such as the personality of the individual teacher -- that the positivistic research tradition ignores.

The entire case is 52 pages long and includes appendices with relevant background materials, descriptions of teaching methods, and research articles. We include the research articles that the teacher mentions in the case so that students come to see how educational research informs practical thinking. We include detail about the teaching methods that the teacher has used to address the problems so that students have enough information to use these strategies as well. Due to the length of the case, we provide a synopsis at the end of this paper rather than include the full case in this paper.

"MALAISE OF THE SPIRIT": FIGURING OUT THE ISSUES

The fundamental issues in this case are far from clear. This ambiguity is deliberate. A central purpose of the case is to show students that educational problems are constructed; they are not givens. The case shows that problem-framing is a creative act, an act of professional imagination.

The case begins in the middle of a dilemma requiring fast professional judgment: An Eskimo boy in Peter Wedman's English class has jumped a Caucasian boy and is pummeling him on the floor while the rest of the

class circles the pair. The Caucasian boy is protecting himself but is not fighting back. Wedman does not know who or what started the fight. Nonetheless he has to act -- immediately.

Wedman handles the fight in a way most teacher education students find surprising. After pulling the Eskimo boy off the Caucasian boy, he orders the Caucasian boy to the principal's office and tells the rest of the class to go out into the hall. He leaves the Eskimo boy alone in the classroom. Why does Wedman do this? What problem does he see that he is trying to solve?

As the case unfolds, Wedman explains his thinking. What Wedman had spotted was the Eskimo boy's nonverbal reactions: The boy was on the verge of tears. Wedman considered the cultural context. For a traditional Eskimo male of high school age to cry in public is a humiliation beyond repair. The boy might respond by dropping out of school. Thus, Wedman saw his immediate problem as getting all the other students out -- to give the Eskimo boy the opportunity to regain his composure.

Wedman had also sensed the emotions that had started the fight, although not until later was his intuitive judgment confirmed. When Wedman talked to the Caucasian boy in the principal's office, the boy admitted that he had looked at the Eskimo boy's folder and uttered the word, "D-." Wedman did not question the Eskimo boy directly. He realized that an indirect means of communication was culturally more appropriate: He asked the Eskimo boy to write him a note. The Eskimo boy gave the note

to another student to deliver (making the communication process even more indirect). It read: "I don't like it when he calls me a dumb Eskimo."

This fight scene, which opens the case, illustrates one type of problematic situation that teachers face. A situation requires judgment and action -- a fast, improvised response in an ambiguous context. Most teachers would take what Dewey (1933) calls "routine action." They would ask who had started the fight, send that student to the office, and carry on with class routines.

A reflective professional like Peter Wedman sees the situation differently. He sees what is at risk -- that a minority student could drop out of school. He has a sense of the cultural context, for example, the need for culturally appropriate indirect communication. He has imagination -- many teachers would not think of the possibility of sending the class out into the hall.

Wedman does not forget about this incident. He turns it over in his mind. The incident, Wedman realizes, symbolizes a more serious problem. This type of problem requires not quick judgment and improvisation but long-term reflection and considered strategies for action. This is the second type of problematic teaching situation that the case brings to students' attention.

Wedman begins the serious and difficult business of thinking through the entire situation and constructing problems that are amenable to action. The case displays for education students what Schon (1983) calls "reflection-in-action" -- the way a teacher thinks through complex situations, gathers evidence, applies theoretical insights to practical

situations, and frames and re-frames problems. Wedman thinks about why his English classroom is tense with bad feeling between the Eskimo students and the Caucasian students. He thinks about why the Eskimo students don't talk much in class. He worries about why the Eskimo students see themselves as "dumb." Like a quantitative researcher, he examines evidence. He looks at his gradebook and analyzes ethnic group differences in grades, tardiness, absenteeism, and standardized test scores. Like an anthropologist, he seeks out key informants who suggest historical and cultural perspectives on the situation. He thinks about research articles he has read on identity formation and motivation that might illuminate the situation. He worries about ethical questions: On the basis of what criteria does he assign grades and are these criteria racist? What does fair grading mean in an English classroom where some students have spoken standard English all their lives and other students speak a non-standard dialect of English? Wedman self-consciously portrays himself as a "detective" doing investigative work. Indeed, he organizes the opening sections of the case into "incidents" and "clues" -- drawing readers into his search for the right problem.

The bases of his classroom problems, Wedman comes to understand, lie outside as well as inside his classroom. The town itself -- inhabited by well-paid white government employees and Eskimos suspended between a subsistence hunting and wage-work culture -- breeds negative attitudes toward schooling which are infecting him, the school staff, and the students. Many Eskimo parents view the teachers as invaders who have come for the high salaries and who are easily replaced. ("You teachers are a

dime a dozen," sniffs a school board member.) Some parents sanction children's absenteeism from school. The school itself is dilapidated due to lack of funds. The school board is composed of community people who are elected on an at-large basis from a region composed of many communities and schools. The board allocates over twice the money per student to the small schools in village communities rather than to Wedman's school in the regional center. Teachers seethe with anger and resentment but many are trapped in the community. They bought houses, and then the economy collapsed.

The depression and resentments that are infecting the teachers and the community, Wedman realizes, are infecting him as well. He had expected his transfer from a small village school in the region to Ruden, the regional center, to be uneventful. After all, he is a seasoned veteran, known throughout the region for his innovative teaching and the gains his Eskimo students made on standardized tests. In Ruden he is shocked to see that he himself is deteriorating.

A second critical incident -- a "lost weekend" -- comes to symbolize Wedman's own fear that he is losing his sense of self-worth and identity. On most weekends Wedman grades papers and prepares for his classes. On this weekend, he sleeps and watches television. He comes to school on Monday without lesson plans. A "malaise of the spirit," Wedman comes to believe, is affecting them all -- the students, the teachers, the town.

Like an actual teaching situation, this case presents not one well-defined issue but many ill-defined issues, intertwined like the fibers of a thick rope. The first part of the case ends with a drama. Will Wedman

work his way out of this situation? Will he flee or will he, like Kurtz in Heart of Darkness, succumb? The second part of the case shows what Wedman did, how he turned around his classroom and the school. But the case ends with an enigma: Despite his success, Wedman leaves Ruden.

THE CONTEXT: CASES IN THE "TEACHERS FOR ALASKA" PROGRAM

"Malaise of the Spirit" is the first teaching case we use in an innovative teacher education program -- Teachers for Alaska. This program is designed to prepare teachers for small village high schools in Eskimo and Indian communities and for large urban classrooms with culturally mixed students. It is a fifth-year program which offers two semesters of professional teacher preparation leading to secondary certification. Each year the program selects a small cohort of 15-20 students and prepares them for teaching through 1) seminars organized around concrete problems of teaching and 2) field experience which offers examples of the best contemporary practice.

The Teachers for Alaska program is grounded firmly in a conception of good teaching as "reflective inquiry." We are trying to prepare teachers who can teach well in the complex and ambiguous world that Wedman inhabits. In this context, we can offer teachers no clear rules for navigating through the cultural terrain. Different communities and different Eskimo and Indian individuals within these communities have different cultural orientations, and these are constantly shifting. Nor can we offer teachers clear prescriptions for "effective teaching behaviors" based on the process-product research tradition. While this

research may be in some ways applicable to the Alaska village context, we do not have enough assurance of its validity to use it as the core of a teacher education program. The teaching context bears little resemblance to the contexts from which these research findings were derived.

What our program can do is to prepare teachers to think through the complex empirical and normative questions they will face in such multi-cultural teaching situations. We can suggest to them what a few of the crucial issues and dilemmas may be. We can point out to them what features of the situation they may want to attend to. We can offer them research knowledge and examples of successful teaching that may prove helpful. But, in the final analysis, they will be on their own.

The Teachers for Alaska curriculum is organized as a series of thematic blocks. Separate foundations and methods courses cannot be found. Each block centers on the dilemmas of teaching particular subjects to Eskimo, Indian, and Caucasian students. The block begins with a set of questions ("How can I teach science if many students cannot read the textbook? Should I use the local environment to teach science and ignore the textbook? What will happen to those students who go on to college? What should my purposes be in teaching science if most students will actually remain in this village?"). We bring to these questions different streams of knowledge: the research knowledge base, what Shulman (1987) calls the "wisdom of practice" of expert teachers, and the personal experience of teacher education students, parents, and others.

Each thematic block of our curriculum is intended to include a teaching case. The teaching cases touch upon the thematic questions of the curriculum blocks but place these questions in a concrete context. "Malaise of the Spirit," for example, nests classroom questions about teaching English ("How do I organize English instruction in a class where some students are sophisticated English speakers and others speak a non-standard dialect?") in the context of wider community issues ("How are community attitudes affecting students' motivation to learn?") and in the context of personal issues ("Why am I falling apart emotionally?").

Cases are fundamental to the Teachers for Alaska program. The case provides a microcosm of the problematic situations we are preparing teachers for. The case offers students an opportunity to hone the specific analytic skills our program is trying to teach. We have also used cases, however, in more conventional teacher education courses. The case fits well into both foundations and methods courses. The case gives concreteness to the philosophical and normative issues considered in foundations courses. The case gives context to the methodological choices discussed in methods courses.

WRITING A CASE

Since an important purpose of a case like "Malaise of the Spirit" is to model for students the thinking of an expert teacher, the logical person to write it would be an expert teacher. I therefore searched for a teacher/case-writer who was both an exemplary teacher in a multi-cultural context and also an accomplished writer.

At the time, I was directing a research project studying "effective teachers in rural Eskimo and Indian villages." We had identified a group of master teachers based on the judgments of three groups: teaching colleagues, students and community school board members, and administrators (Kleinfeld, McDiarmid, Grubis, & Parrett, 1983).

The project gave us a source of teacher/case-writers. More than this, it shaped our thinking about the possibilities and pitfalls of narratives as compared to conventional empirical research. The project had started out to see if the "effective teaching practices" identified in process-product research were important in small rural classrooms and to explore in a more open fashion the teaching styles of effective rural teachers. Our research methods included an interviewing technique which asks subjects to tell detailed stories about successful and unsuccessful experiences and how they had handled them.

This research project provided us with a collection of stories -- which we labeled "teacher tales" -- that proved of enormous interest to novice teachers. Some of the stories were cautionary tales, narratives describing terrible mistakes the teacher had made in an unfamiliar cultural context. Other stories were heroic epics, tales of brilliant action and triumph. What was fascinating and useful about the stories was their concreteness and complexity. The stories in and of themselves, we realized, were far more valuable to teachers than the pale generalizations that we as researchers were trying to extract and abstract from them. Years later, I find I can remember the stories and can no longer remember my own research findings from the project.

I collected "teacher tales" for a time -- aware of their memorability and emotional force -- but unsure of what to do with them. As Ryan (1981) points out in "The Teacher's Story: The Oldest and Newest Form of Educational Research," such stories are vivid and compelling. But they may also be a "distortion and a self-serving picture of what actually happens in classrooms." I hesitated to present to students such teacher tales because I was unsure of their accuracy. What if the teacher was distorting the situation and offering an "insight" that was false?

The lengthy and elaborate "teaching case" offers a way of dealing with this problem of the teacher's accuracy in describing situations and events. Like a literary autobiography, the case reveals the teacher/case writer's personality and ways of thinking about experience. The question of whether and how the teacher may be distorting the situation becomes not an invalidating concern but a critical issue for education students to discuss. How does this particular teacher see the situation? How might the situation appear to other participants -- like members of the school board? A detailed case provides grist for such discussion; a mere anecdote does not. "We do not know if the world really is the way this teacher describes it," we say to our students. "Knowledge is constructed. Think about how this teacher went about constructing problems. When you try to make sense of your own situation, you too will be locked into your own skin."

The case offers evidence -- literary detail -- that enables us to discuss how the teacher's "person" shapes his or her interpretation of events, choices of action, and other people's responses. These subjects

become an important part of teaching the case. The case thus opens for discussion critical issues that the positivistic research tradition gives us no way to talk about -- the impact of teachers' personalities, the moral quality of their intentions, the passions that make them run. The case method legitimizes the discussion of matters critical to teaching.

With my misgivings about the validity of narrative materials allayed, I contracted with a teacher in our sample of effective rural teachers to write a case. I chose this teacher both because he exemplified the reflective approach to teaching we wanted to display for our students and because I had seen examples of his fine writing. I asked him to write about a teaching situation he found especially troubling and that he thought would be particularly instructive for new teachers. I gave him examples of teaching cases developed by the Harvard Business School to use as writing models and also the series of notes to case-writers produced by the Harvard Business School. The teacher sent us an outline of a possible teaching case. After a series of drafts and revisions, we had a teaching case that we could use in the Teachers for Alaska program.

CONDUCTING CLASSES WITH CASES

It is easy to use a case to have a stimulating and exciting class discussion. The question is whether such discussion leads to learning or whether it amounts to little more than loose talk.

To use cases productively, you must have a clear idea of what the case can teach and what you want the class discussion to accomplish. As Christensen and Hansen (1987) emphasize in their discussion of case method

teaching at the Harvard Business School, preparation for teaching a case demands considerable work on the part of the teacher. You do not prepare for class simply by listing a set of general "discussion questions."

Since we use "Malaise of the Spirit" to model for students the process of framing and analyzing educational problems, our questions emphasize Wedman's analytic processes. We begin the case discussion by asking students, "What issues does this case present?" Usually we "poll the group" -- asking each student to name issues and writing their answers on the board. (Indeed, we use and model the same technique Wedman uses to encourage class participation in culturally mixed classes.) After identifying important issues, we start discussion with whatever issue has aroused the most student interest and then move to the other issues. Often students want to start with the fight and how teachers can handle fights. Whatever the issue we begin with, we emphasize the processes of problem construction. We ask, for example, how else Wedman could have framed the problem the fight posed (for example, "the Eskimo boy is beating up on the Caucasian boy due to racial animosity"). What results might have occurred had he framed the problem in this way?

In thinking about the right questions to lead the discussion of a teaching case, we have found helpful the models Christensen and Hansen (1987) provide in their analysis of case method teaching at the Harvard Business School and in the Instructor's Guide to Teaching and the Case Method (Christensen, Hansen, & Moore, 1987). Questions we have culled or adapted from these sources include:

1. What are the central issues in this situation? Which are most urgent? Which are most critical?

2. What, if anything, should anyone do? Who? When? How? Why do you think so?

3. What did the teacher actually do? With what results? At what risk? With what consequences?

4. How do you think this situation appears to other participants -- the students, the superintendent, parents, school board? Why do you think so?

5. How did this situation develop? What, if anything, might alter the basic conditions which created the present difficulties?

6. What, if anything, have you learned from this case?

We ask students to prepare for a class discussion of a case by writing a two-page paper responding to two or three of these questions. In teaching "Malaise of the Spirit," for example, we asked students to identify what they saw as the main issues and to describe and evaluate the teacher's actions. Requiring students to write this short paper ensures that they have actually read the case and that they come to the class prepared to present and defend their positions.

After the case discussion, we again ask students to write a short paper on the case. This paper is intended to help students conceptualize what they have learned from the case discussion. One of our goals in "Malaise of the Spirit," for example, is to increase students' repertoire of strategies for dealing with common problems in multi-cultural classrooms. Wedman, a seasoned teacher, uses an enormous number of imaginative strategies. We ask students simply to describe and evaluate Wedman's actions in order to give students an opportunity to add them to their stock.

Students often tell stories of their own during class discussions of cases. Such personal narratives, as Hymes (1980) points out, are typically considered inappropriate in university classes. They are mere "anecdotes," politely listened to and passed over. In a case discussion, such narratives become useful. They extend our base of exemplars. The teacher also can approach the student's narrative of personal experience with the same analytic framework applied to the case narrative. The teacher can ask: "What were your intentions? Why did you select this strategy? What did you consider the risks of this course of action?" Such questioning helps students apply the analytic framework we are trying to teach to their own experience -- and this is our ultimate purpose in teaching with cases.

We have experienced two problems in leading class discussions with cases. The first is controlling the temperature of classroom discussions. The case can stimulate heated, emotional debate. In one class we conducted, students accused others of "racism." We generally impose a "cool" analytic framework right from the start through the opening activity of naming issues and framing problems. We recognize that one of the important uses of cases is to arouse and, we hope, temper powerful emotions. We want to expose students in the relative calm and safety of the classroom to teaching situations that are likely to arouse in them a sense of outrage and injustice. One of our cases, for example, presents a situation where a young female teacher in an Eskimo village is harassed by a series of obscene telephone calls and is finally thrown out of the village. We want students to understand the historical and

cultural context which creates such situations. We want students to appreciate the different perspectives of the Caucasian teachers and the Eskimo community members concerning what is the fundamental injustice in the situation.

A second issue in teaching with cases concerns minority students who may be in the class. Here the case poses no more difficulty than other class discussions which focus on minority issues. We caution teachers to avoid making a minority student the "spokesperson" for what is assumed to be a monolithic "minority" viewpoint. It is unfair to thrust the minority student into the position of being the "spokesperson" for an entire ethnic group. The teacher will then find it difficult to challenge the minority student's ideas in order to develop his or her analytic skills. In addition, placing minority students in this role hampers the intellectual growth of other students; they have heard what seems to be accorded the status of "official minority viewpoint." Some students feel they no longer have to think about what viewpoints other than their own might be while other students feel pressured into a resentful silence.

WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN FROM "MALAISE OF THE SPIRIT"

Cases give students a sense of what life feels like as a teacher and show how someone else has met and dealt with the kinds of problems they also may encounter. In writing a case, teachers can communicate more than they know -- more than they can state in the form of principles and abstract generalizations. We recognize that a case such as "Malaise of the Spirit" can develop understandings that a list of educational purposes

does not capture. Nonetheless, clarity about educational purposes is important to giving the study of cases clear point.

In teaching "Malaise of the Spirit," we have four fundamental purposes:

1. Giving students vicarious experience with multi-cultural teaching problems -- emotional as well as intellectual preparation for an unjust world

Novice teachers are typically abrim with energy and enthusiasm. They are eager to teach brilliantly, win friends, and receive the appreciation and respect of students, parents, and principals alike. Novice teachers are unprepared -- emotionally as well as intellectually -- for the problems they will face. Here I do not mean instructional problems -- adolescents who cannot read or who are in algebra but cannot do fractions. Teachers expect instructional problems. What they are unprepared for is the politics of school systems and for injustice -- the unfairness of principals and school boards, the attacks they may get from minorities they are struggling to help. Such injustices outrage novice teachers and consume their emotional energies.

"Malaise of the Spirit" dramatizes such injustices. It gives students the opportunity to conceptualize the issue and their sources in the historical and cultural context. Left to their own, teachers typically blame individual people for the unfairness and their anger and frustration drains commitment to teaching.

One of the important contributions of a case literature, we have come to believe, is to give students emotional preparation for dealing with an unjust world. Cases -- due to their very particularity -- create opportunities to talk about injustices which are taboo topics if raised in a general sense. It is neither true nor just, for example, to claim that superintendents "buy" their boards, that Eskimo students harass Caucasian students, that Caucasian students call Eskimo students "dumb." What a case such as "Malaise of the Spirit" offers is a particular instance of such problems. We can talk about them without making any claim that such situations are common or representative. The great virtue of a case is that it neither can nor does make any general claim.

2. Showing Students How to Spot Issues and Frame Problems

"Malaise of the Spirit" shows students how an expert teacher goes about constructing educational problems. The case shows how a teacher sees in small incidents, like a fight between an Eskimo and a Caucasian student, large and significant issues.

Some of our students are able to conceptualize the many interwoven issues in "Malaise of the Spirit" simply by reading the case and following the thinking of the teacher. Other students resist hard thinking. In their first papers on the case, they dismiss the complexity of the situation with a catch-all label -- "it's all politics."

After class discussion of the case, students' papers showed these insights:

> "Wedman seems to be a case study of the process of inquiry and reflecting; he identifies problems, tries solutions, modifies his understanding, and refines his approach to improve the situation."

> "One thing I noticed about Wedman is that his pursuit of solutions involved in-depth analysis of the problems. Often the problems were rephrased or re-identified."

Case discussion is particularly useful for those students who find it difficult to conceptualize issues and to understand the complexity of problems. It is these students who showed the most change when we compared the papers they wrote after a first reading of the case with the papers they wrote after class discussion of the case.

3. Modeling the Process of Analysis and Inquiry in Teaching

"Malaise of the Spirit" not only models the ways in which an expert teacher frames a problem but also the way the teacher goes about trying to understand the problem. This is an eclectic, synthetic process of "sense-making" that resembles the exploratory stage of formal research.

In trying to figure out why Eskimo students see themselves as "dumb" and the sources of the debilitating malaise, Wedman models the practitioner's process of inquiry. Like a quantitatively-oriented researcher, he does statistical analyses. He takes out his gradebook and examines differences between his Eskimo students and Caucasian students in patterns of tardiness, absenteeism, and in test grades.

He thinks about what has caused such ethnic group differences. Like an anthropologist, Wedman seeks out key informants who can give him a historical and cultural perspective on his situation. He takes an interpretive research stance -- listening critically and analytically to conversations in the teachers' lounge and thinking about the functions of this destructive talk. Wedman thinks about published research he has read on motivation and identity formation and uses these conceptual perspectives to try to illuminate his particular situation.

Students reading this case become conscious of how a teacher goes about "reflective inquiry":

> "Wedman immerses himself in a vigorous analysis of the problem. He undertakes an in-depth analysis in which he attempts to discover the reasons that these problems exist. This discovery involves a search for information which is presented to the reader through a series of "clues." His actions -- analysis, research, reflection -- have begun to fight his apathy."

> "I learned that a teacher must use his observational skills to assess 'problems' in himself, his students, his peers, and his community. I hope I can learn to observe more carefully, think through the background and framework of a problem, organize possible strategies while considering negative and positive outcomes and move to address the problems in a flexible manner."

In teaching "Malaise of the Spirit," we conceptualize the way an expert teacher goes about framing and analyzing problems so novice teachers have available a clear heuristic. We emphasize the emotional satisfactions of inquiry -- the passion and excitement. Wedman calls the process "detective work," an image students understand and enjoy.

4. Enlarging Students' Repertoire of Educational Strategies

When students write about this case, we ask them to describe another strategy Wedman could have taken. We are invariably amazed at the difficulty students have in identifying even one other possible avenue for action. Students lack a base of experience from which they can retrieve alternatives. Many students say that they can think of nothing else a teacher might do in this situation. Others dredge out of their experience some inappropriate possibility -- like holding an open house for parents -- and then say that they realize such an action wouldn't really accomplish anything.

A great benefit of "Malaise of the Spirit" is that it describes concrete strategies teachers can use to address the classroom and community problems common in the teaching situations our students are entering. Most students are impressed with the richness and variety of techniques Wedman was able to bring to the problems and try to remember them:

> "I learned from this case some great teaching techniques such as polling, speaking order, posting awards and credentials, and ways to generate an environment of success. I would repeat many of the strategies Wedman used to initiate parental involvement in the school such as asking the Yup'ik teacher to call homes, sending out study tips on union stationary, and posting photographs of students doing homework around the community."

> "I like the ideas Wedman came up with. I will keep most of these in mind and probably use some of them. I really like the idea of 'student leaders' in a class where there are quiet kids. The study skill tips sent home for parents is another great idea. The poster and photos in the paper are tempting to copy, but I want to be more original. These are concrete examples I can give of what I liked that he did and I am leaving some out."

Students also learn from Wedman's errors. Wedman describes, for example, how he unintentionally humiliated an Eskimo girl. He proudly addressed her in Yup'ik (the Native language of the region). She only spoke English and the other students jeered at her for not knowing her own language. Wedman -- and our students -- file this error under "mistakes-definitely-not-to-be repeated."

Students come away from "Malaise of the Spirit" with more than an expanded repertoire of action strategies. They come away with a moral lesson: One teacher can make an enormous difference. One teacher can make an enormous difference even in an educational situation beset with long-term political and cultural problems. Wedman managed to dissipate much of the racial hostility in his classroom. His Eskimo students began to participate more in class, and their grades went up. His students' scores on standardized tests improved. Community people began to speak with approval of the teachers and the schools. Wedman's political action committee changed the way the school board was elected. When we asked students what they had learned from this case, many wrote explicitly: "Wedman's example encouraged me to remember how much of a difference one person can make."

5. Stimulating the Habit of Reflective Inquiry

"Malaise of the Spirit" is not a simple heroic tale. Most students are shocked to come to the end of the case and find out that Wedman left Ruden at the end of the year for "personal reasons." The case ends with a mystery: Why did Wedman go?

In class discussions, we pose other nagging questions: What did Wedman really accomplish? What do you think happened in this school after he left? Is the "one-man-band" approach to educational change the appropriate approach? Could a personality like Wedman -- someone with his intelligence, energy, and egotism -- have done anything else? What would you have done in the same situation?

We want students to develop the habit of asking questions about experience. We want them to leave the case not satisfied by a storybook "happy ending" but with a sense of the complexity of situations and of their own limited understanding:

> "I have made a hundred guesses as to why Wedman left, especially when things seemed to be turning around and getting better. I have speculated about his relationship to teachers, students, administration, and the community. Maybe he was too pushy. Maybe he got into the politics of the area and had to leave. Maybe the place wasn't ready to change or they view change as wrong. I do not know. The biggest lesson I have thought about from this case is what my approach should be when coming into a new teaching position."

Most students reading this case compare themselves to Wedman. They use the case to reflect on their own personalities, styles of action, commitments, and fit with potential teaching situations. The

case demands not only a discussion of abstract principles -- how change comes about and is sustained -- but also a discussion of teachers as people -- how a teacher with Wedman's personality responds to a problem. To understand the case, students need to think about Wedman as a person -- his intelligence and vitality, how he relates to others, the "spiritual" element in his commitment to teaching. Narrative methods of social research, as Polkinghorne (1987) points out, legitimize such discussions.

CONCLUSION

After two years of teaching with cases, we are impressed with their benefits in the professional preparation of teachers. Students find these readings interesting and memorable. The cases, they feel, provide them with useful vicarious experience -- what it feels like to be a teacher, what problems they may have to face, how others have dealt with similar situations.

A good case, however, can accomplish much more. A case can illuminate the very nature of educational problems -- their ambiguity and complexity, the way technical and ethical and philosophical questions come together in a concrete situation. A case can present a vivid model of how an expert teacher thinks about educational dilemmas, gathers information, shapes problems, and constructs imaginative designs for action. Schools of education, like schools of law and business, can use cases to develop in novices the particular way of thinking characteristic of a well-trained professional.

APPENDIX

Synopsis of "Malaise of the Spirit"

PART I: THE CONTEXT AND THE ISSUES

The case opens with a description of Peter Wedman, a veteran teacher who has transferred to a high school in Ruden, the center of the school district, from a small Eskimo village. Wedman "had figured that it was going to be easy," given his professional experience and record of success in teaching English to both Caucasian and Eskimo students.

At Christmas break, however, Wedman finds himself depressed and demoralized trying to "piece together the clues to what had happened."

The case takes readers back to two critical incidents which epitomize Wedman's situation. The first is a fight that broke out in his classroom. An Eskimo boy jumped a Caucasian boy. Later Wedman discovers what led to the fight. The Caucasian boy looked at the Eskimo boy's folder and said "D-." The Eskimo boy sent Wedman a note saying, "I don't like it when he says I'm dumb because I'm Native."

The second incident is a "lost weekend" when Wedman realizes he has succumbed to a spiritual malaise that is infecting the students, the teachers, and the town. He horrifies himself by spending the weekend sleeping and watching television. He comes to school on Monday snappy and without lesson plans. "Wedman could not quite put his finger on it. He only knew that both his students and his colleagues seemed somehow disheartened, spiritless, and that day-by-day he, too, was being forced to

reach deeper and deeper within himself to find the energy he needed to withstand a growing aura of despondency."

The case then draws the reader into Wedman's own analysis of the problems he is facing -- both "inside the classroom" and "outside the classroom." Wedman thinks about why the Eskimo boy "sees himself as a dumb Native, the source of that absurd, racist description." He analyzes the report card grades, tardies, and absenteeism of Eskimo and Caucasian students in his classroom. He studies test scores. He thinks about ethnic patterns of classroom participation and the home situations of individual students in his class. He reviews research articles on motivation and identity formation. He forces himself to identify the bases on which he is assigning grades and forces himself to confront the question: Are my criteria for grading racist?

Next Wedman turns his attention to the "lost weekend" and what has undermined his commitment to teaching. This section of the case is presented in the form of five "clues." Wedman explicitly presents himself as a a "detective" trying to figure out a complex case. Clue #1 describes Ruden's reputation as a "pit," the meeting-ground of a subsistence and technological culture, a community beset by alcoholism and other problems.

Clue #2 describes the "teacher's lounge," where teachers vent their frustrations. The Eskimo parents see the teachers as "incompetent" and "money-grabbing" carpet-baggers. The teachers express their outrage at the dilapidation of their school -- the broken-down Xerox machine and lack of computers. Their school gets "hot dogs" while the small village schools get "steak." The teacher suspects that the Eskimo school board

does not care about the school because it serves large numbers of Caucasian students.

Clue #3 recounts a speech made by a union leader that has impressed Wedman. The speaker argues that "more damage is done to teachers by teachers than by any other group." Teachers listen sympathetically to parents' and students' complaints about other teachers, and in the end "no one is left standing."

Clue #4 details the political and organizational framework of the school district in which Wedman must operate. Wedman thinks through the political environment -- the adversarial relationships between the teachers' union and the school board, why the superintendent curries favor with the Native school board and does not support the teachers, the types of attitudes that the community and board hold toward the teachers. "You teachers are a dime a dozen," said one school board member. "There's plenty more where you come from."

Clue #5 describes a conversation Wedman has with the principal, whom he uses as a key informant. The principal describes the history of the school, how teachers get trapped economically in Ruden, and how the situation drains teachers' commitment and energy.

The first section ends with a description of the problems and the context. Students can be given the first section alone and then asked what, if anything, a teacher could do in such a situation.

PART II WEDMAN'S STRATEGIES AND SHORT-TERM RESULTS

The second section of the case describes Wedman's strategies after the Christmas break and the results. It is divided into three parts: actions inside the classroom, actions outside the classroom, and outcomes.

Wedman begins with a small innovation of great symbolic import. He goes to a local publishing outfit and orders an engraved sign. On the first school day after Christmas vacation, he removes the sign which reads "Teachers' Lounge" and replaces it with the sign "Faculty Room."

Next Wedman changes his classroom organization and grading procedures. He gives each student English assignments with a statement of objectives keyed to students' achievement levels. He assigns grades on the basis of student attainment of these specific objectives -- an approach which equalizes the Eskimo and Caucasian students. He asks the Yup'ik aide to call parents when students are not doing their homework. He provides study sessions before and after school for students who cannot study at home. Soon homework starts coming in regularly. He initiates "roll call" procedures and "taking a speaking order" so that the more verbal Caucasian students do not dominate classroom discussions.

Wedman undertakes an enormous variety of other innovations to raise students' morale and change community attitudes. He takes photographs of students doing homework and sends their pictures to the local newspaper with tag lines like "Their parents should be proud. Working together on their homework are John Carl, Lisa Cooke, and Pam Sheffield." He gives his English classes a section of the wall to decorate with the title "The Theme is Excellence." Before long, the board is filled with student

awards, student writings, magazine photographs of fabulous cars and meals, and news articles about parent activities. A few parents "dropped by after school ostensibly to talk about their child, surreptitiously making sidelong looks for 'their article.'"

Wedman also works outside the classroom context to change community attitudes and political relationships. He asks another teacher, for example, to make a teachers' union poster "that will make people feel good about teachers." It was a hit -- "a photograph of a Native mother with child in arms superimposed over a classroom full of kids, and the title read, "WE TEACH..the children you love. -- the Teachers of the North Riverside Education Association."

Working with other teachers, Wedman forms a political action committee which succeeds in changing the way school board members are elected. Other political actions are unsuccessful. Nonetheless, "the Ruden teachers felt they had won a significant victory, and what was even more important from Wedman's standpoint, they had worked as a team to accomplish the goal."

The case concludes with a brief description of the outcomes of Wedman's efforts. Some Caucasian students complain about "unfair grading." Standardized test scores go up. The Eskimo boy who had started the initial fight leaves Wedman's room proclaiming that this "is a good learning class." The school secretary now routinely refers to the teacher's lounge as the "Faculty Room."

At the end of the year, Wedman leaves the school "for personal reasons."

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